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General Assembly

Sixtieth session

Official Records

81st plenary meeting
Tuesday, 9 May 2006, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Agenda item 112 (*continued*)

Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections

(e) Election of 47 members of the Human Rights Council

The President: The General Assembly will continue its consideration of sub-item (e) of agenda item 112, "Election of 47 members of the Human Rights Council", under the terms of reference outlined in resolution 60/251 of 15 March 2006.

Members will recall that from the 80th plenary meeting, held this morning, three seats still remain to be filled from among the Group of Eastern European States. We shall therefore now proceed to a first restricted ballot.

This second round of balloting shall be restricted to the six States from among the Eastern European Group that were not elected but that obtained the largest number of votes in the previous ballot, namely, Azerbaijan, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, Slovenia and Ukraine. This is in accordance with rule 94 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

Before we begin the voting process, I should like to remind members that, pursuant to rule 88 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order on the actual conduct of the voting.

We shall now begin the voting process. Ballot papers marked "C" will now be distributed. I would ask representatives to write on the ballot paper the names of three States for which they wish to vote.

Ballot papers marked "C", for the Eastern European Group, will be declared invalid if they contain the name of more than three States. If a ballot paper contains names other than Azerbaijan, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, Slovenia or Ukraine, those names will not be counted at all.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Sepúlveda (Chile), Mr. Nsemi (Congo), Ms. Ioannou (Cyprus), Ms. Romulus (Haiti) and Mrs. Rahantabololo (Madagascar) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The meeting was suspended at 3.30 p.m. and resumed at 4.30 p.m.

The President: The result of the voting is as follows:

Group C – Eastern European Group (3 seats)

Number of ballot papers:	189
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	189
Abstentions:	1
Required majority of members:	96

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Number of votes obtained:

Ukraine	109
Azerbaijan	103
Romania	95
Slovenia	88
Lithuania	86
Hungary	48

Having obtained the required majority, Azerbaijan and Ukraine were elected members of the Human Rights Council beginning on 19 June 2006.

The President: I congratulate Azerbaijan and Ukraine on their election as members of the Human Rights Council.

There still remains one seat to be filled from among the Eastern European Group. We shall therefore proceed to the second restricted ballot.

This third round of balloting shall be restricted to the two States from among the Eastern European Group that were not elected but obtained the largest number of votes in the previous ballot, namely, Romania and Slovenia. This is in accordance with rule 94 of the rules of procedure.

Before we begin the voting process, I should like to remind members that, pursuant to rule 88 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order on the actual conduct of the voting.

We shall now begin the voting process. Ballot papers marked "C" will now be distributed. I would ask representatives to write on the ballot paper the name of one State for which they wish to vote. Ballot papers marked "C", for the Eastern European Group, will be declared invalid if they contain the name of more than one State. If any ballot paper "C" contains a name other than Romania or Slovenia, that name will not be counted.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Sepúlveda (Chile), Mr. Nsemi (Congo), Ms. Ioannou (Cyprus), Ms. Romulus (Haiti) and Mrs. Rahantabololo (Madagascar) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The meeting was suspended at 4.45 p.m. and resumed at 5.25 p.m.

The President: The result of the voting is as follows:

Group C – Eastern European Group (1 seat)

Number of ballot papers:	189
Number of invalid ballots:	2
Number of valid ballots:	187
Abstentions:	9
Required majority of members:	96
Number of votes obtained:	
Romania	98
Slovenia	80

Having obtained the required majority, Romania was elected a member of the Human Rights Council beginning on 19 June 2006.

The President: I congratulate Romania on its election as a member of the Human Rights Council.

Having obtained the required majority and the largest number of votes, the following 47 States have thus been elected members of the Human Rights Council beginning on 19 June 2006: Algeria, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, China, Cuba, the Czech Republic, Djibouti, Ecuador, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Romania, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Tunisia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay and Zambia.

I congratulate the States that have been elected members of the Human Rights Council, and I thank the tellers for their assistance in the election.

I now come to the part which will be painful to some and joyful to others.

The General Assembly will now turn to the drawing of lots to select from among the States already elected from each regional group those members which will serve on the Human Rights Council for one year, for two years and for three years.

Members will recall that at the beginning of the election a decision was taken that the staggering of terms of the members of the Council would be in accordance with the table contained document A/INF/60/6 (see para. 11).

In accordance with that decision, the staggering of terms for the drawing of lots shall be as follows: from the 13 African States elected, four members will serve for one year, four for two years and five for three years; from the 13 Asian States elected, four members will serve for one year, four for two years and five for three years; from the six Eastern European States elected, two members will serve for one year, two for two years and two for three years; from the eight Latin American and Caribbean States elected, two members will serve for one year, three for two years and three for three years; and from the seven Western European and other States elected, two members will serve for one year, two for two years and three for three years.

We shall now proceed to the drawing of lots. For each group of States in turn, the Secretariat will present me with an empty domino box, and I shall turn it upside down to show that it is empty. Tiles marked with the names of the States from that group that have been elected to the Human Rights Council will then be placed in the box, one by one. The box will then be shaken. I shall then draw names from the box to select those States that will serve on the Council for one year, for two years and for three years.

First, I will proceed to the drawing of lots from the African States.

Having been drawn by lot by the President, Algeria, Morocco, South Africa and Tunisia were chosen to serve a one-year term on the Human Rights Council; Gabon, Ghana, Mali and Zambia were chosen to serve a two-year term; Cameroon, Djibouti, Mauritius, Nigeria and Senegal were chosen to serve a three-year term.

The President: Next, I will proceed to the drawing of lots from the Asian States.

Having been drawn by lot by the President, Bahrain, India, Indonesia and Philippines were chosen to serve a one-year term on the Human Rights Council; Japan, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea and Sri Lanka were chosen to serve a two-year term; Bangladesh, China, Jordan, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia were chosen to serve a three-year term.

The President: Next, I will proceed to the drawing of lots from the Eastern European States.

Having been drawn by lot by the President, the Czech Republic and Poland were chosen to serve a one-year term on the Human Rights Council; Romania and Ukraine were chosen to serve a two-year term; Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation were chosen to serve a three-year term.

The President: Next, I will proceed to the drawing of lots from the Latin American and Caribbean States.

Having been drawn by lot by the President, Argentina and Ecuador were chosen to serve a one-year term on the Human Rights Council; Brazil, Guatemala and Peru were chosen to serve a two-year term; Cuba, Mexico and Uruguay were chosen to serve a three-year term.

The President: Next, I will proceed to the drawing of lots from the Western European and other States.

Having been drawn by lot by the President, Finland and the Netherlands were chosen to serve a one-year term on the Human Rights Council; France and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland were chosen to serve a two-year term; Canada, Germany and Switzerland were chosen to serve a three-year term.

The President: The drawing of lots is now completed. I can assure members that this was one of my most difficult tasks as President.

The results of the staggering of terms are as follows.

One-year terms will be served by Algeria, Argentina, Bahrain, the Czech Republic, Ecuador, Finland, India, Indonesia, Morocco, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Poland, South Africa and Tunisia.

Two-year terms will be served by Brazil, France, Gabon, Ghana, Guatemala, Japan, Mali, Pakistan, Peru, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Sri Lanka, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Zambia.

Three-year terms will be served by Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Canada, China, Cuba, Djibouti, Germany, Jordan, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mexico, Nigeria, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Switzerland and Uruguay.

I now give the floor to the representative of Zambia.

Mr. Kapoma (Zambia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African Group on this momentous occasion, the election of the first members to serve on the Human Rights Council.

The African Group welcomes this historic election of the founding members of the Human Rights Council. It should be recalled that the adoption of resolution of 60/251 on 15 March 2006 paved the way for the creation of that historic body. We once again commend you, Mr. President, and the two co-chairs of the negotiations, Ambassador Kumalo of South Africa and Ambassador Arias of Panama, who steered the long negotiations to a successful conclusion. We also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his foresight in initiating this process of reform.

At the 2005 summit, our leaders resolved, among other things, to strengthen the United Nations human rights machinery. In that regard, we stand ready to work with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and her Office to ensure that the Office is revitalized to meet the growing challenges of advancing and protecting human rights in this century.

We now have a Human Rights Council which has been elevated from a commission to a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly. The serious work to which we are pledged — promoting and protecting human rights — must now begin. We as the African Group view the challenges facing the elected members, as pioneers, to be, inter alia, to adopt a new agenda and working methods of the Council that are balanced and that reflect, among other things, the importance of achieving the realization of the right to development as well as moral human rights issues such as the eradication of poverty and underdevelopment; to formulate rules and structures designed to ensure a strong Council that is transparent and non-selective and that promotes dialogue and cooperation with Member States, as well as with non-members, and that thus avoids the pitfalls of the much-criticized Commission on Human Rights.

Notwithstanding the criticism levelled against the Commission, we expect the Council to take note of positive elements, particularly in the field of the development of norms and the setting of standards. We hope that those norms will be translated and transformed to bring about real improvements in human rights situations on the ground.

Other challenges will be to support initiatives and reforms of the human rights machinery aimed at creating a stronger, more efficient and less politicized organization that will promote human rights and respond promptly in cases of human rights abuses in any part of the world; to demonstrate leadership in cooperating with the Council; and to abide by the provision of the resolution which calls for a periodic review mechanism. The African Group embraces that process and stands ready to work with the Council in that respect. It should be noted that many of the members of the African Union have ratified the African Peer Review Mechanism, which evaluates members and recommends the promotion and protection of human rights, good governance and the rule of law and justice.

An additional challenge will be to continue to cooperate with treaty bodies in the submission of country reports and to act on their conclusions and recommendations.

We are convinced that the Council will not be old wine in a new bottle, but that it will fulfil the aspirations of the international community. We as the African Group pledge to do our part to fulfil the objectives of the new Council in promoting and protecting human rights and ensuring that the body advances the founding principles that were espoused by the General Assembly in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Finally, let me take this opportunity to thank the General Assembly for the overwhelming support given to African candidates. We take that support and the confidence reposed in us as a challenge for us to live up to the expectations of the international community regarding ensuring human rights in all their aspects. It is the sincere hope of the African Group that members of the Human Rights Council will be conscious of their responsibilities and will understand that they are on the Council not for their own prestige but to serve mankind. Only then will they be worthy of the honour and the privilege the Assembly has bestowed on them.

The President: We have now concluded the election of the first 47 members of the Human Rights Council. A further step has been taken to make the Council operational, but much work remains. The elected members will now have a particular

responsibility to put the structures in place and to prepare for the first meeting of the Human Rights Council, to be held on 19 June 2006. I trust that all Member States will actively engage in the work of the Council, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 60/251. In that context, I would like to recall that paragraph 11 of that resolution provides for participation by and consultations with observers, including States that are not members of the Council, the specialized agencies, other intergovernmental organizations and national human rights institutions, as well as non-governmental organizations.

We are now witnessing a new beginning for the promotion and protection of human rights. The work of the Council will be guided by the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity, non-selectivity and constructive international dialogue and cooperation, with a view to enhancing the promotion and protection of all human rights.

By the election today, we have also, in concrete terms, implemented another mandate from the World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1) agreed upon by our leaders in September 2005. Let me thank all members for their commitment to this part of the reform agenda. They have done great work.

Let me also express my gratitude to the Secretary-General for his strong attachment to human rights, as evidenced in his report "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all" (A/59/2005) and in his steadfast support during the negotiations earlier this year.

The process of, and the preparations for, the new Human Rights Council will now move to Geneva. As I have already stated, I have great confidence in our Geneva colleagues and am confident that the newly elected members will agree on the measures necessary for having a successful first meeting of the Human Rights Council starting on 19 June. I look forward to the result of those preparations and to participating in the meeting in June.

The General Assembly will regularly be able to consider the work of the Council on the basis of the annual reports provided for in resolution 60/251, thus ensuring — and this is essential — a strong link between the Council and this, the chief deliberative body of the United Nations.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (e) of agenda item 112?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.